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MELANTHUS

UPON THE

EDUCATION

OF THE

PEOPLE.

By ——— Lightfoot

DUBLIN:

PRINTED BY P. BYRNE, No. 108, GRAFTON-STREET.

M.DCC.LXXXIX.

(PRICE ONE BRITISH SHILLING.)



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L E T T E R, &c.

MY DEAR SIR,

SEPTEMBER, 1787.

THE long and satisfactory conversation with which you favoured me in March last and your subsequent opening to the House of Commons of your great plan for the education of the people of this kingdom have occupied my mind for a part of every day since that period. It is almost the only subject in which no class of rational beings can be uninterested. The deficiency of education no splendor can conceal, no station can supply; nor is there any person, however elevated his rank, who would not willingly relinquish some part of his envied pre-eminence to be numbered with the children of knowledge. On the other

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hand it is to be supposed, that no person whose early youth has been well trained and cultivated, would consent to exchange that inestimable blessing for the languor and vacuity of unlettered grandeur. That great destroyer, Kouli Khan, could not either write or read; the bloody business of the field being over, his recreation was, as we are informed by his historians, to contemplate a large emerald in his tent. Could he have employed some of his hours in study, the intrepid barbarian might have learned that conquest has nobler ends than the plunder of the wealthy, and the massacre of the defenceless. Well might it be perhaps for the community, that so many who resemble the Khan in his ignorance, would also imitate him in his retirement; but for want of some food for the mind, of some occupation for the understanding, much the greatest part of life is consumed either in deplorable idleness, or shameful debauchery. The power of thinking, without objects for its exercise, is one of the most tormenting properties annexed to the constitution of human nature. Plutarch in his parallel between Lycurgus and Numa gives the preference to the former for having employed so much of his attention, and framed so many of his institutions expressly for the education of the children of the state, which he says the Roman legislator had entirely neglected. The consequence was, that by adhering to this early discipline Sparta flourished near five hundred years, while the ordinances of Numa fell into neglect
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upon his demise, and their efficacy perished with himself. But it is not necessary to resort to ancient history for what can be better ascertained by modern experience. However various the speculations, whatever difference of opinion may be entertained as to modes, all mankind agree in the principle, that without education no country can flourish.

Your plans are great indeed, comprehending the happiness of millions, and of ages yet unborn, beginning with the child of the meanest and most unlettered peasant, and ending in such as by their successful toils in the best service of the public, (the training and forming of its youth) shall be entitled to the most honourable distinctions. It was said by Milton, that “the improvement of education is one of the greatest and noblest designs that can be thought of, and for the want of which this nation perishes.” If a just cultivation of learning was so essential to the welfare of Britain in his day, what shall be said of its importance at present in a sister island less indeed in extent and comprehension, but much more fertile in weeds and brambles, and almost choaked by their excessive exuberance? By education is meant the breeding up of all persons of either sex, and this is evidently the education intended in the speeches from the throne. There cannot be a more exalted subject for consideration, whether the manner of improving the minds of the higher or of the lower orders of the people is to be discussed. Both ranks partake in some degree

degree of the same qualities and colour. The first matter that occurs upon this truly important subject is the gross and hourly abuse of time. Visit a cottage in Leinster, and the following picture will be presented to your view : Near a smoaky fireplace a woman subdued by dull habit into torpor and apathy, with two or three dirty children of different ages near her, not only in utter inactivity themselves, but preventing the mother from executing or pursuing with effect any work of utility or tending to cleanliness : Every one of these children might be occupied either in spinning, knitting, weeding in gardens, or in some other of those employments which, though highly useful, are not laborious : Instead of these, their only occupation is to torment their parents or other persons living with them.

Almost all the evils of this country proceed from the vile education of the people, who are brought up in laziness, dirt, equivocating, lying, pilfering, and artful talk. Amongst those of a rank next above the common people (I mean such as live upon their means, as it is called, without any calling or station) what is to be observed but a listless insipid existence or mere vegetation, kept up by the pitiable habits of swilling pernicious draughts, of swearing, lying, and contriving artful schemes to circumvent and impose upon their superiors ? This swinish picture is too detestable to dwell upon. In order to give, and we need not go far for it, one of a better sort, let us turn our eyes to a large part of the Northern Province, which is in many instances a striking contrast to the three
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other divisions of this beautiful and fertile island. In many parts of Ulster, the appearance of industry immediately presents itself upon your entrance into a cottage ; spinning, weaving, or preparing the raw material previous to those operations employs the principal part of the family, except at those seasons of the year when their few acres call them abroad to the labours of husbandry, and the renovation of their bodily strength, which would otherwise suffer from a constant succession of sedentary employments. You find them coarsely but comfortably clothed, moderately supplied with the necessaries of life, many of them attentive to the duties of religion, possessed of as much learning as is necessary for their stations, and observing a degree of cleanliness which, though far below what it ought to be, bears evident marks of improvement in civilization.

One of the worst yet most striking features of this country is a neglect, and, I might say, a contempt of laws. Most persons, however uninformed, think they have wisdom and knowledge enough to justify a contradiction to legal restraints. They set up their own judgments against the government and against the legislature, and unfortunately have done so too often with effect and with impunity by assistance from slanderous and seditious prints, the scum of literature. The constant and universal profanation of the Lord's day is a remarkable instance of this truth. The magistracy seem to be infatuated in regard to this subject. They and the clergy throw the blame upon each other, while the rest of the world do not scruple

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to pass a censure freely on both. If people in this quarter of the world imagine that the Sabbath is treated in most parts of the neighbouring island, or in Ulster, in the manner in which it is near the metropolis, they are very much mistaken. Even in the luxurious and immense cities of London and Westminster there is by every mechanic and shop-keeper at least the greatest respect paid to Sunday. Nothing is to be bought and sold upon that day. It is needless to paint the very different conduct in Dublin and the neighbouring towns. It is a picture not to be endured by well-wishers to this kingdom, to the government, the laws, or to religion.

Your just and generous design of making the parish schools effectual by appointing in each a master of sound and good principles to train the rising generation to industry, truth, cleanliness, and Christianity, and to instruct them in good English, writing and arithmetic, inspires every thinking mind with the best hopes for the future prosperity of this nation. Is it necessary to prove that the greatest good to be conferred upon a nation, even in a temporal light, would be to sow the seeds of Christianity in the rising generation? Piety and virtue thereby enforced are the best security of civil power. But this is so obvious a truth, and religion appears so perfectly adapted to the political interest of government, that one of the most plausible objections which its adversaries have raised against it is, that it was
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an invention of policy, an engine invented by statesmen to keep them in subjection. Yet small are those advantages when compared to the certain, the infinite blessings which the truths of the gospel impart to every individual who cordially embraces them: such have in their own bosoms a sure preservative against every violation of moral justice; the law is indeed written in their hearts. Nor is the reception of Christianity only a negative good, but the strongest stimulus to labour for the good of all. Who that has the feelings of humanity can reflect without a degree of anguish on the misery of the greatest part of the wretched inhabitants of this island? yet may we not be bold to say, that could they be instructed in genuine Christianity, and prevailed upon to embrace it, the picture would be reversed. Their extreme poverty is not owing to the soil, or the climate, but to the sloth, the pride and drunkenness of the lower class, and the unfeeling lavishness, covetousness, or penury of their superiors; I dare not say their betters. Now who that has any knowledge of the gospel need be told it is a medicine for the root of all these evils, and must, so far as it is embraced, effectually eradicate them. That the greatest part of the poor does not embrace it seems easily accounted for. How shall they believe that which they do not know, nor have the means of knowing. Vast multitudes in this kingdom are in the most brutal state of ignorance, and know so little of the truths of religion,

that it is a profanation of the word to call them Christians. Blessed be God, the great and necessary truths of Christianity require no great expence of time or learning, they are so plain to the simple and upright that "a way-faring man though a fool (as the prophet says) shall not err therein." Shall we not then joyfully labour to put into the hands of the poor the means of finding this pearl of great price.

Notwithstanding it must be admitted that persons of birth and fortune seem to require improvement in their education at least as much as the inferior orders of mankind, yet until the latter shall be in a good degree purged from their base and pernicious habits, such a work cannot be carried on with much prospect of success. One great circumstance in a superior system of education is a reasonable degree of liberty. At one of the great schools (Eton, Westminster, Winchester, and Harrow) a boy finds at a very early age (particularly a boy of parts and memory) that he has much time to manage, and that although bounds are assigned, "*the limits of his little reign*," as the poet describes them, yet that it is in his power to ramble to a certain distance with impunity. These habits seem to be of great advantage to the health and even to the minds of the young students, and certainly render their labours delightful. I have never known any one bred up in places where such a degree of liberty as has been mentioned prevails, who did not recollect, with pleasure and exultation, the times of
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his early education; nor any of those who have been bred under stricter rules of constraint, circummured in a narrow space, and secluded entirely from the commerce of mankind, who did not recollect them with disgust and abhorrence. A very distinguished character, as well for taste in literature as for talents for the public service, whose lot it was to have been educated in this state of imprisonment, declared that the remembrance of his boyish days recalled nothing to his mind but pain and misery; whereas the most absolute blockhead who has received any part of his education at a great public school, finds something in the recollection which he dwells upon with pleasure. †

It seems at first view astonishing that in the multitude of administrations which this nation has seen since the REFORMATION, no one has in any degree attempted a plan for the amendment of the morals of the people until the arrival of his Grace of Rutland. If any attempt of this sort had been made, the parish-schools could not have remained in the state in which they now are. The causes why they have remained in this state are so obvious to every thinking observer, that
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† What has been said of public schools should not have been urged to you who know them all as well as any person can know them, but that I lately found a gentleman educated at one of them, and afterwards at Oxford, who had not considered the matter in that light, yet confessed the truth of the observation when brought before him. Whilst lying, pilfering,

it does not seem necessary at present to expatiate upon them. The REFORMATION and a desire of propagating pure and genuine piety, is probably the reason why the 29th of Henry the VIII. is the period of the well intended act for parish-schools. The beneficed clergy were obviously the persons to look to for a supply, when it was intended to instruct the illiterate not only in the English language, but in English REFORMATION. Would to God the clergy had made this work the chief object of their study; truth, industry, and honesty would then have filled the land.

You will observe that I choose to consider your excellent system as consisting of six different plans. My reason for so doing is this, that I am unwilling to consider all projects for the better breeding of the youth of this country as embarked in the same vessel, and subject to the same attacks and dangers. If any circumstance of locality or the terrors of expense, should obstruct the progress of any one or more of the schemes which you have proposed for the benefit of the youth of family and expectation, there seems no reason why such as are for the use of the inferior orders of mankind, particularly such as the laws in being ought now to govern, should not be put

ing, and dram-drinking, continue to be the usual occupations of the common people, how is it possible that a superior system for the higher orders can be established consistent with that liberty which upon long experience appears to be absolutely necessary?

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in motion without delay. I have the satisfaction to believe that they are already in motion; that fit persons are chosen and determined upon to be the directors of this large machine, and that they are now preparing the ground for a good and lasting foundation.* To dwell longer upon the hopes of a new mode of governing parochial institutions is unnecessary. I quit therefore the subject, although with some regret; for who could not expatiate with delight on an attempt to rescue all future generations of the people

* A very intelligent person (who has observed the manners of the different ranks of people in this kingdom) seemed to conceive that the higher orders should be obliged to set an example of truth, honesty, industry and sobriety, not only to such persons as are immediately dependent on them, but also to the community at large. If my friend can devise any means of enforcing his just doctrine effectually upon persons born to the possession of the goods of fortune, and who, by her means, have opportunity of copying all the vices of all countries, he will doubtless have the assistance of every well-wisher to Ireland. But as all that can be done for persons born to property, seems to be to open good schools for their reception; and as the rich appear upon every account to be a small object in comparison with the poor, I shall not dwell upon the many deficiencies of the former, nor attempt impossibilities. Industry and honesty will assuredly associate, and by wise and timely regulations the mass of people may be coerced for their own good, and an abolition of cheap spirituous liquors may remove one principal cause of their present depravity. The raising the wages of day labourers seems to be a most adviseable object, and by no means at a distance, when industry shall take possession of the land, and banish those poisons which at present choak every vital spring. If the legislature and the government will copy the example of the father of the present prime minister of Britain, the business will be done, and the legend of St. Patrick's war against toads and vipers will be no more remembered. The immortal Pitt, afterwards Earl of Chatham, compleated, *flagrante bello*, compleated the great work for England.

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from base culture, base habits, and all the vileness that at present exists through the greatest part of this kingdom,

The next head, the better ordering and governing twenty-two diocesan schools, is of great importance; but when I consider that the sentiments of Government and of Parliament are known to my lords the Bishops, who are excellent judges of this matter; that the laws for these purposes have been strictly examined, and that there are large funds which have been too long misused, I am the less apprehensive for any miscarriage in this part of the system. If the present bench of Bishops were justly and fairly estimated, (for Bishops are spoken of with more envy than any class of men whatever) the major part would be found men of excellent learning, and of admirable disposition for the purposes of education; some of them in train and antient habits exactly suited to superintend improvements of this nature; so much so, that it seems likely that they would of themselves have engaged in this noble cause, although the government, so much to their eternal honour, had not proposed it. Upon looking over the list of spiritual lords I see eight or nine names of such as have been already well employed in this great service, I mean the training of youth either at school, at the university, or in private. I therefore consider that the state has a right to expect every thing from their assistance, more than their assistance, their government of these schools, as well as bountiful contribution to them, and above all,

all, that through the exercise of their authority the pious and benign intention of Erasmus Smith and other founders shall not be frustrated.

Upon the third head, that of Provincial hospitals or academies, little need be urged. Every inch of that ground, provided good masters of every sort shall be procured, will tend to the best of purposes; the good of mankind, and the glory of the Almighty. Supposing their plans and merits not to exceed the discipline of the Blue-Coat Hospital, can any rational person have a doubt that four additional Blue-Coat Hospitals would be of advantage to this ignorant and thoughtless people? Although no one person appears capable of conducting a Provincial Academy in all its parts, yet there is an expectation in the public, that a gentleman and a scholar who has long laboured in the mines of English literature, and particularly in the science of pronouncing that language, may be appointed a master. This gentleman has been constantly gaining ground upon the general attention by his lectures and publications, which have raised him to the top of his art, not only in the opinion of the natives of Great Britain and Ireland, but in that of foreigners also. Here therefore he may have an opportunity of cultivating objects worthy of his genius and knowledge and of the unremitted attention which he has given to these subjects for more than thirty years past. His experience and character seem to point him out in a peculiar manner to preside over studies and exercises in
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the English language in the first Provincial Academy.

The fourth head I consider as doing the greatest honor to the projector of any of the schemes which have been stated to Parliament. It will be virtually transplanting into this neglected soil the best shoots of the most flourishing classical institutions now existing. If these plants take firm root, there will be no need of sending children to gather the fruits of literature, however delicious, in other countries, which may be procured more easily, cheaply, and perhaps in greater perfection at home. I say in greater perfection, not so much indulging a hope of being able to shut out a taste for expense and the consequent vices, as from a belief that the directors will cull out the best parts of the methods and plans of the present great seminaries, omitting those which are censurable, and extracting from the whole a system better than any of the best models that have hitherto existed. The master of the school of Armagh has set the example of pursuing a plan of learning which must appear to every impartial person to be superior to that of any of the principal schools. In some points a small school (as Armagh still is) cannot answer the full purposes of public education, for number is essential to emulation, and by emulation every public object must be promoted and kept alive. The endowments proposed under this head must operate as a stimulus and a very essential benefit to the cause of learning.

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That a silence upon the remaining part of your system may not be imputed to disapprobation, it seems necessary to add, that as a capital city, and the near vicinity to *clubs* of various sorts does not seem a good situation for the cultivation of science, morals, or religion, my suffrage must go for a college in the fields, and I freely exclaim, as you did to a strenuous assertor of the celebrity and dignity of the mother university,

I decus, I nostrum, melioribus utere campis!

In the report of your speech of April last mention is made in more than one place of an oath to be taken by the visitors previous to the examination of students and scholars. If the reverend persons whom I have in my mind's eye are chosen for directors, such an imposition will be totally superfluous, and will probably hurt their feelings. To a general oath upon entering into office there seems to be little objection, though certainly oaths even in this instance are too frequently administered, and therefore too lightly regarded. But an oath upon every circuit and at every school must appear unnecessary, and impels one to cry out with Brutus,

“ No, not an oath, if not the faith of men,
 “ The suff'rance of our souls, the times abuse,
 “ If these be motives weak, &c.”

Here it occurs to remind you of the necessity of providing for what you touched in your
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speech, but did not dwell upon with that energy which attended you in other parts of your system. I mean the education of *females*. I am ready to allow every thing that can be advanced in favour of their superior innocence, but if they are not trained with greater care, (as their wit is generally sharper than that of men, and their attention less occupied) many of the evils complained of must remain.

BUT at a time when the education and morals of the people are to be subjects of the attention of Parliament, it is hoped their wisdom will be directed to a point of the greatest importance, and, as I conceive, most intimately connected with the success of your noble design. Observation of several years has convinced me, that the early and constant use of spirituous liquors is the grand evil of this kingdom.

Hoc fonte derivata clades

In patriam populumque fluxit.

It would be endless to enumerate the vices and mischiefs which flow from this source. If the government means, as there is every assurance it does, to give good education to the people of this kingdom, it must begin by the abolition of whiskey. There is (one can scarcely believe an evil so very dreadful) a sort of whiskey which sells for two shillings per gallon. Let Parliament raise the duty so as to make it sell at treble the price, (somewhat less than brandy) and spirits will not any longer be the common drink of the common people.

people. It is impossible that any person should have looked upon this country even for a very few years, and not have eagerly wished to make the people better. A race so well featured, so strong, so animated, should be trained up to the best purposes, and not, as they have been, to their opposites. The opportunity is now given! the time is come! EDUCATION has been twice recommended from the Throne.

—*Quod optanti Divûm promittere nemo
Auderetvolvenda dies en attulit ultro!*

One does not look for arguments in such a cause. Almost every object you can look upon is an argument, and would have served as a memento to a people not plunged in perpetual intoxication. There is not a day or hour in which an observer does not see the evils arising from whiskey. Even while I write I hear of death violently accelerated in three instances by its operation. One dreadful instance lies within a few yards of my pen, in the person of one who might probably have lived near forty years longer but for the consequences of spirits.

Were a stranger to form an estimate of the population of Ireland, from the number of licences for the sale of spirituous liquors in every town and village of this kingdom, he would be induced to think that the millions of France and Germany were inconsiderable compared to these multitudes; but he would find upon exami-

nation that this pernicious commodity is out of all proportion either to the necessities or to the number of the people. I have never beheld these fatal words, *licensed to sell spirits*, (always distinct, clean, and legible) without dejection of mind, and inexpressible horror. These few words contain the disgrace and ruin of a nation. Without any strained paraphrase, their import is, *here you are invited to the purchase of crimes, disease, and misery*. This is the true Circe's cup, and the wretch who drinks becomes instantly degraded beneath the condition of a hog, for his reason is lost, and his carcase can neither be sold nor eaten. Enter into any of the innumerable shops or hovels where spirits are retailed, and one object instantly attracts your notice, the vessel which contains this liquor; you see that this is the hope, the darling of the family, this is the proud idol:

— *Pueri circum innuptæque puellæ
Sacra canunt.*

Its staves are sound, its hoops are strong, and its sides are painted, while every other utensil, every other article in the habitation is shattered and filthy. The cask alone without its contents is of more value than the whole household inventory. To think of infusing any notions of industry, probity, or comfort, into souls devoted to sloth, and into brains overwhelmed with intoxication, is a vain speculation. It is to scatter seeds upon the water, and to expect shrubs and fruit without soil

soil or sunshine. A peasant struggling under his morning draught being asked why he was intoxicated at so early an hour, answered, that by being drunk at sun-rise, he had the comfort of it the whole day afterwards. Such is the principle, and such the practice of these untutored, unfortunate people. The comfort of a peasant in other countries, is to have his cottage clean and warm, and to see his children cloathed, industrious and honest. The comfort of a peasant in too many parts of this country, is to wallow with swine, and to forget his existence. Nor is this drink confined to the common people only. In two great provinces it is said to be in general abuse amongst all ranks, except those of considerable distinction.

It seems probable that all the evils which the immoderate consumption of this liquid poison has produced, gin would have brought upon the neighbouring island, had not the legislature wisely and timely interposed. To diminish the number of venders, and to prohibit the very small retail seem to be methods obvious and practicable. Great vigilance will certainly be requisite to counteract the ingenuity of fraud, and resolute perseverance can alone conquer habitual depravity; but extraordinary efforts must be exerted for extraordinary purposes. Let this subject be considered as it ought to be, and difficulty will vanish. The morals of the people destroyed, the strength of a nation wasted, the very vitals of the state consumed and withered, and the cause of all these calamities

calamities, glaring and acknowledged, must reproach the law-makers either with insensibility or with weakness. Were it possible to commute a political for a natural evil, and the melancholy alternative were left to election, no friend to this country would hesitate to prefer all the plagues of Asia to the single plague of whiskey. The former have their times and periods, thousands are sent to the grave, and the devastation ceases. But in the plague of whiskey there is no intermission, incessant as the Vulture of Prometheus,

Immortale jecur tondens ;

one generation perishes, and the next succeeds to the same catastrophe. If it shall be objected, that the exigencies of the state cannot afford such a defalcation from the revenue as the loss of the income arising from the duty upon licenses, and the excise of spirits, let it be considered, that to obtain funds for the support of government by the destruction of the people who are governed is a strange perversion of the purposes of revenue. But some other beverage must be substituted in the place of that which shall be taken away, and if it be made pleasant, wholesome, and invigorating, there will be a certainty of its consumption, and in all probability an increase instead of a diminution of revenue. While this potation renders artizans and labourers unhealthy and penniless, did it at the same time make them innocent
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and contented, there would be some compensation; but on the contrary, they become at once the most poor, debilitated and the most wicked race in the universe. Wine and malt liquors when not swallowed to such excess as to overwhelm the faculties, sometimes open the natural benignity of the soul, and brighten the imagination. But in this poison there is some infernal quality, which not only extinguishes all that is amiable in the disposition, but excites the sot to every species of outrage and barbarity. While he has any use of speech, he will utter execrations and blasphemy; while he has any power of motion, he will move to mischief. These are the parents, the brethren, and the kindred of the children intended to be educated, and this is the domestic example for the rising generation! we must reverse the decalogue, and instead of *honor*, insert *abhor your father and mother, and your days shall be long in the land*. If you suspect that my zeal may have hurried me into exaggeration, consult those who have seen most and are best informed, consult the judges of the land, who have too frequent opportunities of contemplating the dreadful effects of spirituous liquors. You will find upon this point no contrariety of evidence and little difference of opinion. Should the good genius of Ireland considerably prolong the duration of the present government, great reformation may be expected in many material points of management and polity. Fluctuating and short-lived administrations have been among
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the distinguished curses of this kingdom. What great scheme of improvement, what substantial plan for public benefit could be digested and perfected, while government was hardly a six months tenure in the hands which held it? The attention of statesmen in Ireland was diverted from national objects to the cabals at Westminster, and congratulatory addresses were scarcely offered up to one Lord Lieutenant, when Collins and Dugdale were to be ransacked to furnish subjects for panegyric on the ancestry of his successor. To unsay what had been said, to undo what had just been done, to vilify what had been praised, and to extol what had been reprobated seemed to be the safest rule for the temporizing politician. All that might naturally be expected followed of course. The executive power was set at defiance. The laws were eluded, the legislature was treated with derision and insult, and the very vilest of the populace trampling upon all subordination, issued wild mandates, and dictated to their rulers. Take a short retrospect but to the appearance and condition of the metropolis when the Duke of Rutland arrived in Ireland. Gangs of drunken banditti took post in the streets and avenues of the city by day, and favoured by darkness and a despicable* magistracy committed all sorts of depredations by night. Seditious clubs hatching mischief, and disseminating anarchy among the people assembled in every quarter, exhortations to treason

son, affassination, and rebellion were the constant burden of the newspapers, and these were publicly and for a time with impunity hawked about and sold all over the capital. The most respectable senators were proscribed; lists of their names were handed round, and they were marked out as the proper victims for the fury of an intoxicated and desperate rabble. The rage of democratic madness could proceed no farther. The permanency even of a four years government has produced such an entire change, that were not the revolution so recent one could hardly believe the necessity for it had existed. Seeing order rise out of confusion, security in the place of danger, and law with liberty supplanting licentiousness, it is impossible not to wish that power be long vested in hands which have used it so worthily, and for the best purposes of rational government. The laws have recovered their tone and vigour, and some new statutes have been added to the code, which though long wished for and necessary, were the despair of former administrations. The officers of the crown, the public, and the Parliament have this certain assurance, that the noble person who represents the sovereign, will chearfully take the lead in every project, and patronize every system which can secure the welfare or promote the prosperity of the country which he is appointed to govern. Candid, benevolent, liberal and firm; the mild but steady tenor of his official conduct has already secured to him the respect and confidence of the public; while

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his amiable manners and the unostentatious goodness of his heart, have left impressions to his honour as diffusive and general as his intercourse with society. The Duke of Rutland has now visited every part of Ireland; probably there are not twenty natives of rank who have seen so much of it. Representations will not come under the same disadvantages as might have attended them with most of his predecessors. How often must his eyes have been shocked and his heart chilled by the spectacles which whiskey presented to him!

It is a mistake to conceive that the people of Ireland are by nature more lazy, more ferocious, or more cruel, than in other countries. Transplant them and the reverse of the assertion is more near to truth. The hardest labour (that of coalheaving, and the carrying of sedan chairs) is performed in London chiefly by Irishmen. But their liquor is porter, not spirits. Vices and crimes are not of their nature but of their habits, and until these are subdued or eradicated, they will continue to be pests of society. While the means of intoxication are at hand, to be procured at every corner and in every hovel, a reformation of manners cannot be expected. The chalice will be drained to the foulest dregs, and the major part of the peasantry of this ill-fated land consigned to debauchery and perdition.

Many well-disposed and well informed persons, who have often turned their thoughts to this subject, lament the continuance of these evils,
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and acknowledge the source of them, but tell you that prevention is impossible; that were all licenses withdrawn, should the legislature impose duties amounting to prohibition, the *clandestine* distillation would still frustrate all good purposes, and the deluge would not be stopped, but turned into another channel. If this indeed be true, the prospect is most melancholy! but the difference is wide between difficulty and impossibility. It is not easy to conceive that if licenses were withdrawn, the sale of spirits by retail prohibited, and stills rendered useless, that there would not be some diminution of the quantity consumed, and consequently a diminution of the mischief. A still is an expensive and capacious vessel; were Parliament to call in every one of them, and indemnify the proprietors for the loss sustained by the surrender, could the public money be better expended, or is it possible that such a measure would not have some operation? To destroy at once more than a thousand fountains and reservoirs of drunkenness and debauchery, one would imagine might be to make some progress in the cause of reformation. A thousand and a thousand times has it been declared, that it was impossible to restrain the *licentiousness of the press*, that it was impossible to pass a *riot-act*: We have lived to see both these impossibilities surmounted. To check the whiskey of the press seemed to be a more desperate undertaking than to abolish the whiskey of the still. Men were not ashamed to stand up as advocates for the former, for liberty throws a lustre and a sunshine around its excesses. The cause itself, the

very name could dazzle, where it could not persuade. But where is the eloquence, who is the sophist that can be heard with favour while a *cask of whiskey* is the theme of his encomium? A distiller superintending the process of his still always reminds me of the occupation of the devil. The great enemy of mankind is for ever busy in preparing snares and temptations to entrap the unwary: His understrapper is not idle, and is a fellow-labourer in the same vineyard.

Permit me now to give an abstract of the proceedings in the House of Commons of Great Britain upon a subject exactly similar to the present,

On Friday, Feb. 20th, 1729, Sir Charles Turner, according to order, reported from the committee of the whole House, to whom it was referred to consider further of ways and means for raising the supply granted to his Majesty, the resolutions they had directed him to report to the House, which he read in his place, and afterwards delivered in at the clerk's table; where the same were read, and are as follows, *viz.*

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this committee, that for every gallon of mixed or compound waters, or spirits commonly called gin, that any distiller or retailer of such liquors (except apothecaries) shall be possessed of on the twenty-fourth day of June, 1729, there be granted to his Majesty a duty of five shillings per gallon.

Resolved,

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this committee, that for every gallon of such mixed or compound waters or spirits, which from and after the twenty-fourth day of June, 1729, shall be made by any distiller, dealer, or retailer of such liquors for sale, (except apothecaries) there shall be granted to his Majesty a duty of five shillings per gallon.

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this committee, that from and after the twenty-fourth day of June, 1729, the sum of twenty pounds, yearly, shall be paid to his Majesty, by every person who shall sell or retail any such compound strong waters or spirits.

The said resolutions being severally read a second time, were, upon the question severally put thereupon, agreed unto by the House.

Ordered, That a bill be brought in upon the said resolutions, and that Sir Charles Turner, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Attorney General, Mr. Solicitor General, Sir George Oxenden, and Mr. Scrope, do prepare and bring in the same.

House of Commons, Anno. 1735.

A petition of his Majesty's justices of the peace for the county of Middlesex, in their general quarter sessions assembled, was presented to the House, and read; setting forth, that the drinking of Geneva and other distilled spirituous liquors
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hath, for some years last past, greatly encreased, especially among the people of inferior rank; and that the constant and excessive use thereof hath already destroyed thousands of his Majesty's subjects, and renders great numbers of others unfit for useful labour and service, debauching at the same time their morals, and driving them into all manner of vice and wickedness; and that this pernicious liquor is now sold, not only by distillers and Geneva shops, but by many other persons of inferior trades, by which means journeymen, apprentices and servants, are drawn in to taste, and by degrees to like, approve, and immoderately to drink thereof; and that the petitioners apprehend the public welfare and safety, as well as the trade of the nation, would be greatly affected by it, as this practice is dangerous and mischievous to the health, strength, peace and morals, and tends greatly to diminish the labour and industry of his Majesty's subjects; and therefore praying that the House will take the premises into their serious consideration, and apply such remedy as the House shall judge most proper.

Ordered, That the said petition be referred to the consideration of a committee of the whole House.

Resolved, That this House will, upon Monday morning next, resolve itself into a committee of the whole House to consider of the said petition.

House

House of Commons, Anno. 1735.

Sir Charles Turner, according to order, reported from the committee of the whole House who were appointed to consider of the petition of his Majesty's justices of the peace for the county of Middlesex, in their general quarter sessions assembled, that the committee had considered of the said petition, and had come to several resolutions, which they had directed him to report to the House; and he read the report in his place, and afterwards delivered it in at the clerk's table; where the said resolutions were read, and are as follows, *viz.*

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this committee, that the low price of spirituous liquors is the principal inducement to the excessive and pernicious use thereof.

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this committee, that in order to prevent the excessive and pernicious use of spirituous liquors, a discouragement be given thereto by a duty to be laid upon all such liquors sold by retail.

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this committee, that the vending, bartering, or uttering the said liquors, be restrained to persons keeping public brandy-shops, public victualling-houses, coffee-houses, ale-houses, and inn-holders, and to such apothecaries and surgeons as shall make use of the same by way of medicine only.

Resolved,

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this committee, that no person keeping a public brandy-shop, a public victualling-house, coffee-house, or ale-house; or being an inn-holder, be permitted to vend, barter or utter the said liquors, but by licence, with a duty made payable thereupon.

The said resolutions being severally read a second time were, upon the question severally put thereon, all agreed to by the House.

Ordered, That the said report be referred to the committee of the whole House, to whom it is referred to consider further of ways and means for raising the supply granted to his Majesty.

On Monday, March 20th, in the committee of ways and means, the following resolutions were moved :—

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this committee, that for all spirituous liquors which any retailer thereof shall from and after the 24th day of June, 1736, be possessed of, there be granted to his Majesty a duty of twenty shillings per gallon.

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this committee, that from and after the 24th day of June, 1736, the sum of fifty pounds yearly shall be paid to his Majesty for a licence, to be taken out yearly, for every person keeping a public brandy-shop, a public victualling-house, coffee-house, or ale-house, or being an inn-holder, who shall vend, barter, or utter any such spirituous liquors.

House

House of Commons, Anno 1750.

The House being informed that the sheriffs of the city of London attended at the door, they were called in, and, at the bar, presented to the House a petition of the lord mayor, aldermen, and commons of the city of London in common council assembled.

And then they withdrew.

And the same petition was read; complaining of the common, habitual, and excessive use of spirituous liquors which prevails amongst the lower rank of people, to a degree unknown to any former times; and representing to the House that this scandalous and pernicious practice is not only a reproach to our religion and civil polity, but destroys the health, strength, and industry of the poor of both sexes, and of all ages, inflames them with rage and barbarity, and occasions frequent robberies and murders in the streets and avenues of this metropolis; and what is yet a more affecting circumstance, that the petitioners have the greatest reason to apprehend that it must unavoidably tend to prevent the supply of a most useful part of his Majesty's subjects, and thereby threaten destruction to the trade, navigation and power of this kingdom. And praying the House to apply such remedy to this growing evil as to the House shall seem meet.

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Ordered,

Ordered, That the said petition be referred to the consideration of a committee of the whole House.

Resolved, That this House will upon this day fortnight, resolve itself into a committee of the whole House to consider of the said petition.

House of Commons, Anno 1751.

Mr. Alderman Bethell, according to order, reported from the committee of the whole House, to whom it was referred to consider of the petition of the lord mayor, aldermen and commons of the city of London, in common council assembled, relating to spirituous liquors, the resolutions which the committee had directed him to report to the House, which he read in his place; and afterwards delivered in at the clerk's table, where the same were read, and are as followeth, viz.

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this committee, that the excessive drinking of spirituous liquors is, in a great measure, owing to the unlawful retailing of the same, by numbers of low and disorderly persons, without licence.

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this committee, that the laws for preventing the retailing of spirituous liquors without licence, and for regulating the licence retailers thereof, be explained and enforced.

Resolved,

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this committee, that an additional duty be laid upon spirituous liquors and licences.

The said resolutions being severally read a second time, were, upon the question severally put thereupon, agreed to by the House.

Ordered that the said report be referred to the consideration of the committee of the whole House, to whom it is referred to consider further of ways and means for raising the supply granted to his Majesty.

Mr. Bacon, according to order reported, from the committee of the whole House, to whom it was referred to take into consideration the state of the distillery, the resolutions which the committee had directed him to report to the House, which he read in his place, and afterwards delivered in at the clerk's table, where the same were read, and are as followeth, viz.

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this committee, that the present high price of spirituous liquors is a principal cause of the diminution in the home consumption thereof, and hath greatly contributed to the health, sobriety, and industry of the common people.

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this committee, that in order to continue for the future, the present high price of all spirits, and for home consumption, a large additional duty be laid upon all spirituous liquors whatsoever, distilled or imported into Great-Britain.

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this committee, that there be a drawback of the said additional duties upon all spirituous liquors distilled in Great-Britain, which shall be exported.

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this committee, that an additional bounty be granted, under proper regulations, upon the exportation of all spirituous liquors drawn from corn in Great-Britain.

The said resolutions being severally read a second time, were upon the question severally put thereupon, agreed to by the House.

Ordered, That the said report be referred to the consideration of the committee of the whole House, to whom it is referred to consider further of ways and means for raising the supply granted to his Majesty.

Thus was this great work accomplished in England, thus was the Python subdued, and this country has had the example for many years in vain.

There cannot be any reason to doubt the concurrence of the very able person who now presides at the revenue board. His sound understanding, patience, and indefatigable industry, have long been acknowledged and applauded. His coadjutors in office cannot be mentioned but with respect and honor.

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Their despondency in this case may be considered as a mortal symptom, but if they have been unwilling to innovate, fearful to touch any established branch of public income, it is to be hoped that the rising circumstances of Ireland will not only justify, but call for new expedients. The National Debt, (a spoonful to a river, compared with that of Britain) extended trade, and increasing opulence all conspire to take off the fetters from custom and prescription; and FINANCE SHOULD BE EXHAUSTED TO ITS LAST RESOURCE BEFORE IT PRESUMES TO INVADE THE HEALTH AND MORALS OF THE PEOPLE.

Let me, dear Sir, again and again exhort you to give the subject a full examination.

Nocturnâ versate manu, versate diurnâ.

If the Government declines to take the lead in this enterprize, no progress will be made. Ireland must be contented to remain the most dissimilar and motley nation in Europe; with this peculiar and extraordinary distinction, that the inferior orders of the people (in other countries the most uncorrupt and industrious) will be in this the most profligate and useless. Debasing their own nature, they complain of oppression, and (did it exist) deprive themselves at the same time of all sense to feel and all power to resist it.

Parliament

Parliament for ever endeavouring to exalt,
and the people as constantly endeavouring to de-
press the national character.

With large tracts of country in every province
uncultivated, and almost destitute of inhabitants,
we must wish the solitude, if possible, increased,
and that still fewer may abide to shock their
fellow creatures and dishonor the name of
manhood.

Excuse the zealous warmth of

Your very faithful Friend,

MELANTIUS.

P O S T S C R I P T.

November, 1787.

SINCE the last words were written and copied for the press, it has pleased Providence to remove from the world the truly noble person who presided over this kingdom.

THAT hand which was ever stretched out to assist the deserving, that heart which was ever open to liberal and benevolent feeling, is now cold and lifeless.

MELANTIUS had hoped to have pleased him by an acknowledgment of his generous warmth in the great cause of EDUCATION.

But what are the Hopes of Man!

To call the attention of Government to a truly great national concern, the greatest that can be imagined for this country, to engage the King and the King's Ministers to support a system
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which alone can render Ireland a nation, seems to be your peculiar province. You have declared that you will not abandon the interests of this country. In that declaration she confides.

F I N I S.

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